



MEN, WOMEN, AND CHAIN SAWS

GENDER IN THE MODERN
HORROR FILM



PRINCETON
CLASSICS



CAROL J. CLOVER

With a new preface by the author

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FOR *Greta* AND *Joshua*

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CHAPTER 1

Her Body, Himself

AT THE BOTTOM of the horror heap lies the slasher (or splatter or shocker or stalker) film: the immensely generative story of a psychokiller who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims, one by one, until he is subdued or killed, usually by the one girl who has survived.¹ Drenched in taboo and encroaching vigorously on the pornographic, the slasher film lies by and large beyond the purview of the respectable (middle-aged, middle-class) audience. It has also lain by and large beyond the purview of respectable criticism. Staples of drive-ins and exploitation houses, where they "rub shoulders with sex pictures and macho action flicks," these are films that are "never even written up."² Even commentaries that celebrate "trash" disavow the slasher, usually passing it over in silence or bemoaning it as a degenerate aberration.³ Film magazine articles on the genre rarely get past technique, special effects, and profits. Newspapers relegate reviews of slashers to the syndicated "Joe Bob Briggs, Drive-In Movie Critic of Grapevine, Texas," whose lowbrow, campy tone ("We're talking two breasts, four quarts of blood, five dead bodies. . . . Joe Bob says check it out")

¹ A longer version of this essay was published under the title "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film" in *Representations* 20 (1987). At that time, the only full-length studies of the slasher or splatter film (very broadly defined) were William Schoell's unhelpful *Stay Out of the Shower* and John McCarty's *Splatter Movies*. Since then, Dika has published *Games of Terror*, a structural analysis with social-political commentary of the slasher (or stalker) film proper. Also since then, of course, the slasher formula itself has, in one guise or another, passed into the mainstream; see the Afterword.

² Dickstein, "The Aesthetics of Fright," p. 34.

³ "Will Rogers said he never met a man he didn't like, and I can truly say the same about the cinema," Harvey R. Greenberg writes in his paean to horror, *The Movies on Your Mind*. His claim does not, however, extend to the "plethora of execrable imitations [of *Psycho*] that debased cinema" (p. 137).

establishes what is deemed the necessary distance between the readership and the movie.⁴ There are of course the exceptional cases: critics or social observers who have seen at least some of the films and tried to come to grips with their ethics or aesthetics or both. Just how troubled is their task can be seen from its divergent results. For one critic, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* is "the *Gone With the Wind* of meat movies."⁵ For another it is a "vile little piece of sick crap . . . nothing but a hysterically paced, slapdash, imbecile concoction of cannibalism, voodoo, astrology, sundry hippie-esque cults, and unrelenting sadistic violence as extreme and hideous as a complete lack of imagination can possibly make it."⁶ Writes a third, "[Director Tobe] Hooper's cinematic intelligence becomes more apparent in every viewing, as one gets over the initial traumatizing impact and learns to respect the pervasive felicities of camera placement and movement."⁷ The Museum of Modern Art bought the film the same year that at least one country, Sweden, banned it.

Robin Wood's tack is less aesthetic than ethnographic. "However one may shrink from systematic exposure to them [slasher films], however one may deplore the social phenomena and ideological mutations they reflect, their popularity . . . suggests that even if they were uniformly execrable they shouldn't be ignored."⁸ We may go a step further and suggest that the qualities that locate the slasher film outside the usual aesthetic system—that indeed render it, along with pornography and low horror in general, the film category "most likely to be betrayed by artistic treatment and lavish production values"⁹—are the very qualities that make it such a transparent source for (sub)cultural attitudes toward sex and gender in particular. Unmediated by otherworldly fantasy, cover plot, bestial transformations, or civilized routine, slasher films present us in startlingly direct terms with a world in which male and female are at desperate odds but in which, at the same time, masculinity and femininity are more states of mind than body. The premise of this chapter, then, is that the slasher film, not despite but exactly because of its crudity and compulsive repetitiveness, gives us a clearer picture of current sexual

⁴ "Joe Bob Briggs" was evidently invented as a solution to the *Dallas Times Herald's* problem of "how to cover trashy movies." See Calvin Trillin's "American Chronicles: The Life and Times of Joe Bob Briggs, So Far," *New Yorker*, 22 December 1986, pp. 73–88.

⁵ Lew Brighton, "Saturn in Retrograde," p. 27.

⁶ Stephen Koch, "Fashions in Pornography," pp. 108–9.

⁷ Wood, "Return of the Repressed," p. 30.

⁸ Robin Wood, "Beauty Bests the Beast," p. 63.

⁹ Dickstein, "The Aesthetics of Fright," p. 34.

attitudes, at least among the segment of the population that forms its erstwhile audience, than do the legitimate products of the better studios.

If popularity alone measures the fitness of a form for study, and if profits and sequels are the measure of popularity, then the slasher qualifies. *Halloween* cost \$320,000 to make and within six years had grossed more than \$75,000,000; even a highly produced film like *The Shining* has repaid its costs tenfold. *Alien* (a science-fiction/slasher hybrid) and *The Hills Have Eyes* are at Part Two. *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *Psycho* are currently at Part Three. *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Halloween* have reached Part Five, and *Friday the Thirteenth* Part Eight. These are better taken as remakes than sequels; although the later part purports to take up where the earlier part left off, in most cases it simply duplicates with only slight variation the plot and circumstances—the formula—of its predecessor. Nor do different titles indicate different plots; *Friday the Thirteenth* is set at summer camp and *Halloween* in town, but the story is much the same, compulsively repeated in those thirteen films and in dozens like them under different names. The popularity of the slasher began to tail off in the mid-eighties, and by the end of the decade the form was largely drained.

But for some twelve years the slasher was the “exploitation” form of choice for junior horror fans. Although girls too went to slasher movies, usually in the company of boyfriends but sometimes in same-sex groups (my impression is that the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series in particular attracted girls in groups), the majority audience, perhaps even more than the audience for horror in general, was largely young and largely male—conspicuously groups of boys who cheer the killer on as he assaults his victims, then reverse their sympathies to cheer the survivor on as she assaults the killer. Young males are also, I shall suggest, the slasher film’s implied audience, the object of its address. The question, then, has to do with that particular audience’s stake in that particular nightmare; with what in the story is crucial enough to warrant the price of admission, and what the implications are for the current discussion of women and film.

THE SLASHER FILM

The appointed ancestor of the slasher film is Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960). Its elements are familiar: the killer is the psychotic product of a sick family, but still recognizably human; the victim is a beautiful, sexually active woman; the location is not-home, at a Ter-

rible Place; the weapon is something other than a gun; the attack is registered from the victim's point of view and comes with shocking suddenness. None of these features is original, but the unprecedented success of Hitchcock's particular formulation, above all the sexualization of both motive and action, prompted a flood of imitations and variations. In 1974, however, a film emerged that revised the *Psycho* template to such a degree and in such a way as to mark a new phase: *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper).¹⁰ Together with *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978), it engendered a new spate of variations and imitations.

The plot of *Chain Saw* is simple enough. Five young people are driving through Texas in a van; they stop off at an abandoned house and are serially murdered by the psychotic sons of a degenerate local family; the sole survivor is a woman. The horror, of course, lies in the elaboration. Early in the film the group picks up a hitchhiker, but when he starts a fire and slashes Franklin's arm (having already slit open his own hand), they kick him out. The abandoned house they subsequently visit, once the home of Sally and Franklin's grandparents, turns out to be right next door to the house of the hitchhiker and his family: his brother, Leatherface; their father; an aged and only marginally alive grandfather; and their dead grandmother and her dog, whose mummified corpses are ceremonially included in the family gatherings. Three generations of slaughterhouse workers, once proud of their craft but now displaced by machines, have taken up killing and cannibalism as a way of life. Their house is grotesquely decorated with human and animal remains—bones, feathers, hair, skins. The young people drift apart in their exploration of the abandoned house and grounds and are picked off one by one by Leatherface and Hitchhiker. Last is Sally. The others are attacked and killed with dispatch, but Sally must fight for her life, enduring all manner of horrors through the night. At dawn she manages to escape to the highway, where she scrambles into a pickup and is saved.

Likewise the nutshell plot of *Halloween*: a psychotic killer (Michael) stalks a small town on Halloween and kills a string of teenage friends, one after another; only Laurie survives. The twist here is that Michael has escaped from the asylum in which he has been incarcerated since the age of six, when he killed his sister minutes after she and her boyfriend parted following an illicit interlude in her parents' bed. That murder, in flashback, opens the film. It is related entirely in the killer's first person (I-camera), and only after the fact is the

¹⁰ For an account of the ways the "family horror" aspect of the *Psycho* formula has evolved over the decades, see Patricia Erens, "The Stepfather."

identity of the perpetrator revealed. Fifteen years later, Michael escapes his prison and returns to kill Laurie, whom he construes as another version of his sister (a sequel clarifies that she is in fact his *younger* sister, adopted by another family at the time of the earlier tragedy). But before Michael gets to Laurie, he picks off her high school friends: Annie, in a car on her way to her boyfriend's; Bob, going to the kitchen for a beer after sex with Lynda; Lynda, talking on the phone with Laurie and waiting for Bob to come back with the beer. At last only Laurie remains. When she hears Lynda squeal and then go silent on the phone, she leaves her own babysitting house to go to Lynda's. Here she discovers the three bodies and flees, the killer in pursuit. The remainder of the film is devoted to the back-and-forth struggle between Laurie and Michael. Again and again he bears down on her, and again and again she either eludes him (by running, hiding, breaking through windows to escape, locking herself in) or strikes back (once with a knitting needle, once with a hanger). In the end, Dr. Loomis (Michael's psychiatrist in the asylum) rushes in and shoots the killer (though not so fatally as to prevent his return in the sequels).¹¹

Before we turn to an inventory of generic components, let us add a third, later example: *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre II*, from 1986. The slaughterhouse family (now cutely named the Sawyers) is the same, though older and, owing to their unprecedented success in the sausage business, richer.¹² When Mr. Sawyer begins to suspect from her broadcasts that a disk jockey named Stretch knows more than she should about one of their recent crimes, he dispatches his sons Leatherface and Chop Top to the radio station late at night. There they seize the technician and corner Stretch. At the crucial moment, however, power fails Leatherface's chain saw. As Stretch cowers before him, he presses the now-still blade up along her thigh and

¹¹ Dika outlines the narrative sequence of the standard "stalker" film as follows. Past Event: The young community is guilty of a wrongful action; the killer sees an injury, fault, or death; the killer kills the guilty members of the young community. Present Event: an event commemorates the past action; the killer's destructive force is reactivated; the killer reidentifies the guilty parties; a member from the old community warns the young community; the young community pays no heed; the killer stalks members of the young community; the killer kills members of the young community; the heroine sees the extent of the murders; the heroine sees the killer; the heroine does battle with the killer; the heroine kills or subdues the killer; the heroine survives; but the heroine is not free. See her *Games of Terror*, esp. p. 136.

¹² The evolution of the human-sausage theme is typical of the back-and-forth borrowing in low horror. *Texas Chain Saw Massacre I* hints at it; *Motel Hell* turns it into an industry ("Farmer Vincent's Smoked Meats: This is It!" proclaims a local billboard); and *Texas Chain Saw Massacre II* expands it to a statewide chili-tasting contest.

against her crotch, where he holds it unsteadily as he jerks and shudders in what we understand to be orgasm. After that the sons leave. The intrepid Stretch tracks them to their underground lair outside of town. Tumbling down the Texas equivalent of a rabbit hole, Stretch finds herself in the subterranean chambers of the Sawyer operation. Here, amid all the slaughterhouse paraphernalia and within walls that drip with blood, the Sawyers live and work. Like the decrepit mansion of Part One, the residential parts of the establishment are quaintly decorated with human and animal remains. After a long ordeal at the hands of the Sawyers, Stretch manages to scramble up through a culvert and beyond that up onto a nearby pinnacle, where she finds a chain saw and wards off her final assailant. The Texas Ranger, who had followed her to the Sawyers with the intention of saving her and busting the case, evidently perishes in a grenade explosion underground, leaving Stretch the sole survivor.

The spiritual debt of all the post-1974 slasher films to *Psycho* is clear, and it is a rare example that does not pay a visual tribute, however brief, to the ancestor—if not in a shower stabbing, then in a purling drain or the shadow of a knife-wielding hand. No less clear, however, is the fact that the post-1974 examples have, in the usual way of folklore, contemporized not only Hitchcock's terms but also, over time, their own. We have, in short, a cinematic formula with a twenty-six-year history, of which the first phase, from 1960 to 1974, is dominated by a film clearly rooted in the sensibility of the 1950s, while the second phase, bracketed by the two *Texas Chain Saw* films from 1974 and 1986, responds to the values of the late sixties and early seventies. That the formula in its most recent guise may be in decline is suggested by the campy, self-parodying quality of *Texas Chain Saw II*, as well as the emergence, in legitimate theater, of the slasher satire *Buckets of Blood*. Between 1974 and 1986, however, the formula evolved and flourished in ways of some interest to observers of popular culture, above all those concerned with the representation of women in film. To apprehend in specific terms the nature of that mutation, let us, with *Psycho* as the benchmark, survey the genre by component category: killer, locale, weapons, victims, and shock effects.

Killer

The psychiatrist at the end of *Psycho* explains what we already guessed from the action: that Norman Bates had introjected his mother, in life a "clinging, demanding woman," so completely that she constituted his other, controlling self. Not Norman but "the mother half of his mind" killed Marion—*had* to kill Marion—when he

(the Norman half) found himself aroused by her. The notion of a killer propelled by psychosexual fury, more particularly a male in gender distress, has proved a durable one, and the progeny of Norman Bates stalk the genre up to the present day. Just as Norman wears his mother's clothes during his acts of violence and is thought, by the screen characters and also, for a while, by the film's spectators, to *be* his mother, so the murderer in the *Psycho*-imitation *Dressed to Kill* (Brian De Palma, 1980), a transvestite psychiatrist, seems until his unveiling to be a woman; like Norman, he must kill women who arouse him sexually. Likewise, in muted form, Hitchhiker, Chop Top, and Leatherface in the *Chain Saw* films: none of the brothers shows overt signs of gender confusion, but their cathexis to the sick family—in which the mother is conspicuously absent but the preserved corpse of the grandmother (answering the treated body of Mrs. Bates in *Psycho*)¹³ is conspicuously present—has palpably arrested their development. Both are in their twenties (thirties, in Part Two), but Hitchhiker and Chop Top seem gangly kids and Leatherface jiggles in baby



Leatherface in *Texas Chain Saw Massacre*.

¹³ And answering to the films of his mother that "Buffalo Bill" (the would-be transsexual psychokiller of *Silence of the Lambs*) compulsively runs for himself every evening. So, in any case, the novel; the film omits the detail, which is also reminiscent of the childhood footage, including shots of his mother's funeral, Mark compulsively screens for himself in *Peeping Tom* (see chapter 4).

fat behind his butcher's apron. Like Norman Bates, whose bedroom still displays his childhood toys, Hitchhiker/Chop Top and Leatherface are permanently locked in childhood. Only when Leatherface "discovers" sex in Part Two does he lose his appetite for murder. In *Motel Hell*, a send-up of modern horror with special reference to *Psycho* and *Chain Saw II*, we are repeatedly confronted with a portrait of the dead mother silently presiding over all manner of cannibalistic and incestuous doings on the part of her adult children. The most recent incarnation of Norman Bates is *Silence of the Lambs'* Buffalo Bill, a mother-fixated would-be transsexual who, having been denied a sex-change operation, is sewing his own woman-suit out of real women's skins.

No less in the grip of boyhood is the killer in *The Eyes of Laura Mars* (1978). The son of a hooker, a hysterical woman absent for days at a time, the killer has up to now put his boyish anger to good use in police work—the film makes much of the irony—but the sight of Laura's violent photographs causes it to be unleashed in full force. The killer in *Hell Night* is the sole member of his family to survive, as a child, a murderous rampage on the part of his father; the experience condemned him to an afterlife as a murderer himself. In *Halloween* the killer is a child, at least in the first instance: Michael, who at the age of six is so enraged at his sister (evidently for her sexual relations with her boyfriend, enacted on the parental bed) that he stabs her to death with a kitchen knife. The remainder of the film details his return killing spree at the age of twenty-one, and Dr. Loomis, who has overseen the case in the interim, explains that although Michael's body has attained maturity, his mind remains frozen in infantile fury. In *It's Alive*, the killer is a literal infant, evidently made monstrous through intrauterine apprehension of its parents' ambivalence (early in the pregnancy they considered an abortion).

Even killers whose childhood is not immediately at issue and who display no overt gender confusion are often sexually disturbed. The murderer in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* is an undead child molester. The killer in *Slumber Party Massacre* says to a young woman he is about to assault with a power drill: "Pretty. All of you are very pretty. I love you. Takes a lot of love for a person to do this. You know you want it. You want it. Yes." When she grasps the psychodynamics of the situation in the infamous crotch episode of *Texas Chain Saw II*, Stretch tries a desperate gambit: "You're really good, you really are good, you're the best," she repeats; and indeed, immediately after ejaculation Leatherface becomes palpably less interested in his saw. The parodic *Motel Hell* spells it out: "His pecker don't work; you'll see when he takes off his overalls—it's like a shriv-

eled prune," Bruce says of his killer-brother Vincent when he learns of Terry's plans to marry him. Terry never does see, for on her wedding night he attempts (needless to say) not sex but murder. Actual rape is practically nonexistent in the slasher film, evidently on the premise—as the crotch episode suggests—that violence and sex are not concomitants but alternatives, the one as much a substitute for and a prelude to the other as the teenage horror film is a substitute for and a prelude to the "adult" film (or the meat movie a substitute for and prelude to the skin flick).¹⁴ When Sally under torture (*Texas Chain Saw I*) calls out "I'll do anything you want," clearly with sexual intention, her assailants respond only by mimicking her in gross terms; she has profoundly misunderstood the psychology.

Female killers are few and their reasons for killing significantly different from men's. With the possible exception of the murderous mother in *Friday the Thirteenth I*, they show no gender confusion. Nor is their motive overtly psychosexual; their anger derives in most cases not from childhood experience but from specific moments in their adult lives in which they have been abandoned or cheated on by men (*Strait-Jacket*, *Play Misty for Me*, *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman*).¹⁵ (Rape-revenge films like *Ms. 45* and *I Spit on Your Grave* I will discuss in chapter 3.) *Friday the Thirteenth I* is a noteworthy anomaly. The killer is revealed as a middle-aged woman whose son, Jason, drowned years earlier as a consequence of negligence on the part of the camp counselors. The anomaly is not sustained in the sequels, however. Here the killer is Jason himself, not dead after all but living in a forest hut. The pattern is a familiar one; his motive is vengeance for the death of his mother, his excessive attachment toward whom is manifested in his enshrining of her severed head. Like Stretch in the crotch episode of *Texas Chain Saw II*, the girl who does final combat with Jason in Part Two sees the shrine, grasps its significance (she's a psych major), and saves herself by repeating in a commanding tone, "I am your mother, Jason; put down the knife." Jason, for his part, begins to see his mother in the girl (I-camera) and obeys her.

¹⁴ Writes Wood: "The release of sexuality in the horror film is always presented as perverted, monstrous, and excessive, both the perversion and the excess being the logical outcome of repressing. Nowhere is this carried further than in *Texas [Chain Saw] Massacre [I]*. Here sexuality is totally perverted from its functions, into sadism, violence, and cannibalism. It is striking that there is no suggestion anywhere that Sally is the object of an overtly sexual threat; she is to be tormented, killed, dismembered, and eaten, but not raped" ("Return of the Repressed," p. 31).

¹⁵ The bias is intact in 1991's two nonhorror examples of female-murderer movies, *Mortal Thoughts* and *Thelma and Louise*. The targets of the former are impossible husbands; of the latter, a would-be rapist and, indirectly, a leering truckdriver (he is not himself murdered, but his eighteen-wheeler is).

In films of the *Psycho* type (*Dressed to Kill*, *The Eyes of Laura Mars*), the monster is an insider, a man who functions normally in the action until, at the end, his other self is revealed. *Texas Chain Saw* and *Halloween* introduced another sort of monster: one whose only role is that of killer and one whose identity as such is clear from the outset. Norman may have a normal half, but these killers have none. They are emphatic misfits and outsiders. Michael is an escapee from a distant asylum; Jason subsists in the forest; the Sawyer sons live a bloody subterranean existence outside of town. Nor are they clearly seen. We catch sight of them only in glimpses—few and far between in the beginning, more frequent toward the end. They are usually large, sometimes overweight, and often masked. In short, they may be recognizably human, but they are only marginally so, just as they are only marginally visible—to their victims and to us, the spectators. In one key respect, however, the killers are superhuman: their virtual indestructibility. Just as Michael (in *Halloween*) repeatedly rises from blows that would stop a lesser man, so Jason (in the *Friday the Thirteenth* films) survives assault after assault to return in sequel after sequel. It is worth noting that the killers are normally the fixed elements and the victims the changeable ones in any given series.

Terrible Place

The Terrible Place, most often a house or tunnel, in which victims sooner or later find themselves is a venerable element of horror. The Bates mansion is just one in a long list of such venues—a list that continues, in the modern slasher, with the decaying mansion of *Texas Chain Saw I*, the abandoned and haunted mansion of *Hell Night*, the house for sale but unsellable in *Halloween* (also a point of departure for such films as *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Amityville Horror*), and so on. What makes these houses terrible is not just their Victorian decrepitude, but the terrible families—murderous, incestuous, cannibalistic—that occupy them. So the Bates mansion enfolds the history of a mother and son locked in a sick attachment, and so the *Texas Chain Saw* mansion/labyrinth shelters an outlaw brood presided over by the decaying corpse of the grandmother. Jason's forest hut (in the *Friday the Thirteenth* sequels) is no mansion, but it houses another mummified mother (or at least her head), with all the usual candles and dreadful paraphernalia. The terrors of the *Hell Night* mansion stem, we learn, from an early owner's massacre of his children. Into such houses unwitting victims wander in film after film, and it is the conventional task of the genre to register in close detail the victims'

dawning understanding, as they survey the visible evidence, of the human crimes and perversions that have transpired there. That perception leads directly to the perception of their own immediate peril.

In *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre II*, horrors unfold in a subterranean labyrinth connected to the world above by channels and a culvert. The family is intact, indeed thrives, but for reasons evidently having to do with the nature of their sausage business has moved residence and slaughterhouse underground. Likewise the second basement of the haunted mansion in *Hell Night*: strewn with decaying bodies and skeletons, lighted with masses of candles. Other tunnels are less familial: the one in *Body Double* that prompts Jake's claustrophobic faint, and the horror house tunnel in *He Knows You're Alone* in which the killer lurks. The morgue episode in the latter film, certain of the hospital scenes in *Halloween II*, and the bottom-cellar scenes from various films may be counted as Terrible Tunnels: dark, exitless, slick with blood, and laced with heating ducts and plumbing pipes. In *Hell Night*, as in *Texas Chain Saw II*, Terrible House (the abandoned mansion) and Terrible Tunnel (the second basement) are one and the same.

The house or tunnel may at first seem a safe haven, but the same walls that promise to keep the killer out quickly become, once the killer penetrates them, the walls that hold the victim in. A phenomenally popular moment in post-1974 slashers is the scene in which the victim locks herself in (a house, room, closet, car) and waits with pounding heart as the killer slashes, hacks, or drills his way in. The action is inevitably seen from the victim's point of view; we stare at the door (wall, car roof) and watch the surface open to first the tip and then the shaft of the weapon. In Hitchcock's *The Birds*, it is the birds' beaks we see penetrating the door. The penetration scene is commonly the film's pivotal moment; if the victim has up to now simply fled, she now has no choice but to fight back.

Weapons

In the hands of the killer, at least, guns have no place in slasher films. Victims sometimes avail themselves of firearms, but like telephones, fire alarms, elevators, doorbells, and car engines, guns fail in a pinch. In some basic sense, the emotional terrain of the slasher film is pretechnological. The preferred weapons of the killer are knives, hammers, axes, ice picks, hypodermic needles, red hot poker, pitchforks, and the like. Such implements serve well a plot predicated on stealth and the unawareness of later victims that the bodies of their friends are accumulating just yards away. But the use of

noisy chain saws and power drills and the nonuse of such relatively silent means as bow and arrow, spear, catapult, and sword¹⁶ would seem to suggest that closeness and tactility are also at issue. The sense is clearer if we include marginal examples like *Jaws* and *The Birds*, as well as related werewolf and vampire genres. Knives and needles, like teeth, beaks, fangs, and claws, are personal extensions of the body that bring attacker and attacked into primitive, animalistic embrace.¹⁷ In the rape-revenge film *I Spit on Your Grave*, the heroine forces her rapist at gunpoint to lower his pants, presumably with the intention of shooting him in the genitals. But she changes her mind and invites him home for what he all too readily supposes will be a voluntary follow-up to an earlier gang rape. Then, as they sit together in a bubble bath, she castrates him with a knife. If we wondered why she gave up the pistol, now we know: all phallic symbols are not equal, and a hands-on knifing answers a hands-on rape in a way that a shooting, even a shooting preceded by a humiliation, does not.

Beyond that, the slasher evinces a fascination with flesh or meat itself as that which is hidden from view. When the hitchhiker in *Texas Chain Saw I* slits open his hand for the thrill, the onlookers recoil in horror—all but Franklin, who seems fascinated by the realization that all that lies between the visible, knowable outside of the body and its secret insides is one thin membrane, protected only by a collective taboo against its violation. It is no surprise that the rise of the slasher film is concomitant with the development of special effects that let us see with our own eyes the “opened” body.

Victims

Where once there was one victim, Marion Crane, there are now many: five in *Texas Chain Saw I*, four in *Halloween*, fourteen in *Friday the Thirteenth III*, and so on. (As Schoell puts it, “other filmmakers figured that the only thing better than one beautiful woman being gruesomely murdered was a whole series of beautiful women being gruesomely murdered.”)¹⁸ Where once the victim was an adult, now

¹⁶ With the occasional exception: for example, the spear gun used in the sixth killing in *Friday the Thirteenth III*.

¹⁷ Stuart Kaminsky, *American Film Genres*, p. 107.

¹⁸ Schoell, *Stay Out of the Shower*, p. 35. It may be argued that *Blood Feast* (1963), in which a lame Egyptian caterer slaughters one woman after another for their bodily parts (all in the service of Ishtar), provides the serial-murder model (it is the obvious model of *Blood Diner*, and Frank Henenlotter’s *Frankenhooker* updates the formula). *Peeping Tom* (1960), in which a photographer seeks out women to photograph and kill (with a camera equipped with a spike) is another important film in the tradition; see

she is typically in her teens (hence the term "teenie-kill pic"). Where once she was female, now she is both girl and boy, though most often and most conspicuously girl. For all this, her essential quality remains the same. Marion is first and foremost a sexual transgressor. The first scenes show her in a hotel room dressing at the end of a lunch hour, asking her lover to marry her. It is, of course, her wish to be made an honest woman of that leads her to abscond with forty thousand dollars, an act that leads her to the Bates motel in Fairvale. In much the way we watched her dress in the opening sequences, we now watch her undress. Moments later, nude in the shower, she dies.

In the slasher film, sexual transgressors of both sexes are scheduled for early destruction. The genre is studded with couples trying to find a place beyond purview of parents and employers where they can have sex, and immediately afterward (or during the act) being killed. The theme enters the tradition with the Lynda-Bob subplot of *Halloween*. Finding themselves alone in a neighborhood house, Lynda and Bob make hasty use of the master bedroom. Afterward, Bob goes downstairs for a beer. In the kitchen he is silently dispatched by the killer, Michael, who then covers himself with a sheet (it is *Halloween*), dons Bob's glasses, and goes upstairs. Supposing the bespectacled ghost in the doorway to be Bob, Lynda jokes, bares her breasts provocatively, and finally, in irritation at "Bob" 's stony silence, dials Laurie on the phone. Now the killer advances, strangling her with the telephone cord, so that what Laurie hears on the other end are squeals she takes to be orgasmic. *Halloween II* takes the scene a step further. Here the victims are a nurse and orderly who have sneaked off for sex in the hospital therapy pool. The watching killer, Michael again, turns up the thermostat and, when the orderly goes to check it, kills him. Michael then approaches the nurse from behind (she thinks it is the orderly) and strokes her neck. Only when he moves his hand toward her bare breast and she turns around and sees him does he kill her.

Postcoital death, above all when the circumstances are illicit, is a staple of the genre. Denise, the English vamp in *Hell Night*, is stabbed to death in bed during Seth's after-sex trip to the bathroom. In *He Knows You're Alone*, the student having the affair with her professor is similarly murdered in bed while the professor is downstairs changing a fuse; the professor himself is stabbed when he returns and discovers the body. The *Friday the Thirteenth* series exploits the device at

chapter 4, below. But it is to the scenes (and music) of *Psycho* that slasher films pay homage, even when the plots have gone their own way.

least once per film. Particularly gruesome is the variant in Part Three. Invigorated by sex, the boy is struck by a gymnastic impulse and begins walking on his hands; the killer slices down on his crotch with a machete. Unaware of the fate of her boyfriend, the girl crawls into a hammock after her shower; the killer impales her from below.¹⁹ Brian De Palma's *Dressed to Kill* presents the infamous example of the sexually desperate wife, first seen masturbating in her morning shower during the credit sequence, who lets herself be picked up later that day in a museum by a man with whom she has sex first in a taxi and later in his apartment. On leaving his place in the evening, she is suddenly attacked and killed in the elevator. The cause-and-effect relationship between (illicit) sex and death could hardly be more clearly drawn.

Killing those who seek or engage in unauthorized sex amounts to a generic imperative of the slasher film. It is an imperative that crosses gender lines, affecting males as well as females. The numbers are not equal, and the scenes not equally charged; but the fact remains that in most slasher films after 1978 (following *Halloween*), men and boys who go after "wrong" sex also die. This is not the only way males die; they also die incidentally, as girls do, when they get in the killer's way or try to stop him, or when they stray into proscribed territory. The victims of *Hell Night*, *Texas Chain Saw*, and the *Friday the Thirteenth* films are, respectively, those who trespass in Garth Manor, those who stumble into the environs of the slaughterhouse family, and those who become counselors at a cursed camp, all without regard to sex. Boys die, in short, not because they are boys, but because they make mistakes.

Some girls die for the same mistakes. Others, however, and always the main ones, die—plot after plot develops the motive—because they are female. Just as Norman Bates's oedipal psychosis is such that only female victims will do, so Michael's sexual anger toward his sister (in the *Halloween* series) drives him to kill her—and after her a string of sister surrogates. In much the same way, the transsexual psychiatrist in *Dressed to Kill* is driven to murder only those women who arouse him and remind him of his hated maleness. In *The Eyes of Laura Mars*, the killer's hatred of his mother drives him to prey on women specifically—with the significant exception of one gay male.

¹⁹ This theme too is spoofed in *Motel Hell*. Farmer Vincent's victims are two hookers, a kinky couple looking for same (he puts them in room number 1 of the motel), and Terry and her boyfriend Bo, out for kicks on a motorcycle. When Terry (allowed to survive) wonders aloud why someone would try to kill them, Farmer Vincent answers her by asking pointedly whether they were married. "No," she says, in a tone of resignation, as if accepting the logic.

He Knows You're Alone features a killer who in consequence of an earlier jilting preys exclusively on brides-to-be.

But even in films in which males and females are killed in roughly even numbers, the lingering images are of the latter. The death of a male is nearly always swift; even if the victim grasps what is happening to him, he has no time to react or register terror. He is dispatched and the camera moves on. The death of a male is moreover more likely than the death of a female to be viewed from a distance, or viewed only dimly (because of darkness or fog, for example), or indeed to happen offscreen and not be viewed at all. The murders of women, on the other hand, are filmed at closer range, in more graphic detail, and at greater length. The pair of murders at the therapy pool in *Halloween II* illustrates the standard iconography. We see the orderly in two shots: the first at close range in the control room, just before the stabbing, and the second as he is being stabbed, through the vapors in a medium long shot; the orderly never even sees his assailant. The nurse's death, on the other hand, is shot entirely in medium close-up. The camera studies her face as it registers first her unwitting complicity (as the killer strokes her neck and shoulders from behind), then apprehension, and then, as she faces him, terror; we see the knife plunge into her repeatedly, hear her cries, and watch her blood fill the pool. This cinematic standard has a venerable history, and it remains intact in the slasher film. Indeed, "tits and a scream" are all that is required of actresses auditioning for the role of victim in "Co-Ed Frenzy," the fictive slasher film whose making constitutes the frame story of *Blow-Out*. It is worth noting that none of the auditioners has both in the desired amount, and that the director must resort to the use of doubles: one for the tits, one for the screams.

Final Girl

The image of the distressed female most likely to linger in memory is the image of the one who did not die: the survivor, or Final Girl. She is the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril; who is chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise, and scream again. She is abject terror personified. If her friends knew they were about to die only seconds before the event, the Final Girl lives with the knowledge for long minutes or hours. She alone looks death in the face, but she alone also finds the strength either to stay the killer long enough to be rescued (ending A) or to kill him herself (ending B). But in either case, from 1974 on, the survivor figure has been female. In Schoell's words: "The vast

majority of contemporary shockers, whether in the sexist mold or not, feature climaxes in which the women fight back against their attackers—the wandering, humorless psychos who populate these films. They often show more courage and levelheadedness than their cringing male counterparts.”²⁰ Her scene occupies the last ten to twenty minutes (thirty in the case of *Texas Chain Saw I*) and contains the film’s emphatic climax.

The sequence first appears in full-blown form (ending A) in *Texas Chain Saw I* with Sally’s spirited self-defense and eventual rescue. Her brother and companions were dispatched suddenly and uncomprehending, one by one, but Sally survives the ninth round: long enough to see what has become of her fellows and is in store for her, long enough to meet and even dine with the whole slaughterhouse family, long enough to undergo all manner of torture (including the ancient grandfather’s feeble efforts to strike a fatal hammer blow on the temple as they bend her over a washtub), and long enough to bolt and rebolt, be caught and recaught, plead and replead for her life, and eventually escape to the highway. For nearly thirty minutes of screen time—a third of the film—we watch her shriek, run, flinch, jump or fall through windows, sustain injury and mutilation. Her will to survive is astonishing; in the end, bloody and staggering, she finds the highway, Leatherface and Hitchhiker in pursuit. Just as they bear down on her, a truck comes by and crushes Hitchhiker. Minutes later a pickup driver plucks Sally up and saves her from Leatherface. The final shots show us a receding Leatherface from her point of view (the bed of the pickup): standing on the highway, wounded (having gashed open his abdomen during the truck episode) but upright, waving the chain saw crazily over his head.

Halloween’s Final Girl is Laurie. Her desperate defense is shorter in duration than Sally’s but no less fraught with horror. Limping from a leg wound, she flees to a garden shed and breaks in through the window with a rake. Neighbors hear her screams for help but suspect a Halloween prank and shut the blinds. She gets into her own babysitting house—by throwing a potted plant at a second-story window to rouse the children—just as the killer descends. Minutes later he comes through the window and they grapple; she manages to fell him with a knitting needle and seizes his butcher knife—but drops it when he seems dead. As she goes upstairs to the children, the killer rises, takes the knife, and goes after her. She takes refuge in a closet,

²⁰ Further: “Scenes in which women whimper helplessly and do nothing to defend themselves are ridiculed by the audience, who find it hard to believe that anyone—male or female—would simply allow someone to kill them with nary a protest” (Schoell, *Stay Out of the Shower*, pp. 55–56).



Michael discovers Laurie in the closet (*Halloween*).

lashing the two doorknobs together from the inside. As the killer slashes and stabs at the closet door—we see this from her inside perspective—she bends a hanger into a weapon and, when he breaks the door down, stabs him in the eye. Again thinking him vanquished, she sends the children for the police and sinks down in pain and exhaustion. The killer rises again, but just as he is about to stab her, Dr. Loomis, alerted by the children, rushes in and shoots the killer.

Given the drift in just the four years between *Texas Chain Saw* and *Halloween*—from passive to active defense—it is no surprise that the films following *Halloween* present Final Girls who not only fight back but do so with ferocity and even kill the killer on their own, without help from the outside.²¹ Valerie in *Slumber Party Massacre* (a film directed by Amy Jones and scripted by Rita Mae Brown) takes a machete-like weapon to the killer, striking off the bit from his power

²¹ There are exceptions, some of them disturbing. In *Splatter University*, Professor Julie Parker is clearly established as a Final Girl from the outset and then killed right at the beginning of what we are led to believe will be the Final Girl sequence (she kicks the killer, a psychotic priest-scholar who keeps his knife sheathed in a crucifix, in the groin and runs for the elevator—only to be cornered and stabbed to death). So meticulously are the conventions observed, and then so grossly violated, that we can only assume sadistic intentionality. This is a film in which (with the exception of an asylum orderly in the preface) only females are killed, and in highly sexual circumstances.

drill, severing his hand, and finally impaling him. Alice assaults and decapitates the killer of *Friday the Thirteenth*. Pursued by the killer in *Hell Night*, Marti pries the gate key from the stiff fingers of a corpse to let herself out of the mansion grounds to safety; when the car will not start, she repairs it on the spot; when the car gets stuck in the roadway, she inside and the killer on top, she frees it in such a way as to cast the killer on the gate's upper spikes. The grittiest of the Final Girls is Nancy of *A Nightmare on Elm Street I*. Aware in advance that the killer will be paying her a visit, she plans an elaborate defense. When he enters the house, she dares him to come at her, then charges him in direct attack. As they struggle, he springs the contraptions she has set so that he is stunned by a swinging sledge hammer, jolted and half-incinerated by an electrical charge, and so on. When he rises yet again, she chases him around the house, bashing him with a chair.²² In *Texas Chain Saw II*, from 1986, the Final Girl sequence takes mythic measure. Trapped in the underground slaughterhouse, Stretch repeatedly flees, hides, is caught, tortured (at one point forced to don the flayed face of her murdered technician companion), and nearly killed. She escapes with her life chiefly because Leatherface, having developed an affection for her after the crotch episode, is reluctant to ply his chain saw as his father commands. Finally Stretch finds her way out, leaving the Texas Ranger to face certain death below, and clammers up a nearby pinnacle, Chop Top in pursuit. In a crevice near the summit she finds the mummified grandmother, ceremoniously enthroned in an open-air chamber, and on her lap, a functional chain saw. She turns the saw on Chop Top, gashing open his abdomen and tossing him off the precipice. The final scene shows her in extreme long shot, in brilliant sunshine, waving the buzzing chain saw triumphantly overhead. (It is a scene we are invited to compare to the final scene of *Texas Chain Saw I*, in which the wounded Leatherface is shown staggering after the pickup on the highway and waving his chain saw crazily over *his* head.) In Part One the Final Girl, for all her survivor pluck, is, like Red Riding Hood, saved through male agency. In Part Two, however, there is no male agency; the figure so designated, the Texas Ranger, proves so utterly ineffectual that he cannot save himself, much less the girl. The comic ineptitude and failure of would-be "woodsmen" is a repeated theme in the later slasher films. In *Slumber Party Massacre*, the role is played by a woman—though a butch one (the girls' basketball

²² This film is complicated by the fact that the action is envisaged as a living dream. Nancy finally kills the killer by killing her part of the collective nightmare.

coach). She comes to the slumber party's rescue only to fall victim to the drill herself. But to focus on just who brings the killer down, the Final Girl or a male rescuer, is—as the easy alternation between the two patterns would seem to suggest—to miss the point. The last moment of the Final Girl sequence is finally a footnote to what went before—to the quality of the Final Girl's fight, and more generally to the qualities of character that enable her, of all the characters, to survive what has come to seem unsurvivable.

The Final Girl sequence too is prefigured, if only rudimentarily, in *Psycho*'s final scenes, in which Lila (Marion's sister) is caught reconnoitering in the Bates mansion and nearly killed. Sam (Marion's boyfriend) detains Norman at the motel while Lila snoops about (taking note of Norman's toys). When she perceives Norman's approach, she flees to the basement. Here she encounters the treated corpse of Mrs. Bates and begins screaming in horror. Norman bursts in and is about to strike when Sam enters and grabs him from behind. Like her generic sisters, then, Lila is the spunky inquirer into the Terrible Place: the one who first grasps, however dimly, the past and present danger, the one who looks death in the face, and the one who survives the murderer's last stab.

There the correspondences end, however. The *Psycho* scene turns, after all, on the revelation of Norman's psychotic identity, not on Lila as a character—she enters the film midway and is sketchily drawn—and still less on her self-defense. The Final Girl of the slasher film is presented from the outset as the main character. The practiced viewer distinguishes her from her friends minutes into the film. She is the Girl Scout, the bookworm, the mechanic. Unlike her girlfriends (and Marion Crane) she is not sexually active. Laurie (*Halloween*) is teased because of her fears about dating, and Marti (*Hell Night*) explains to the boy with whom she finds herself sharing a room that they will be using separate beds. Although Stretch (*Texas Chain Saw II*) is hardly virginal, she is not available, either; early in the film she pointedly turns down a date, and we are given to understand that she is, for the present, unattached and even lonely. So too Stevie of Carpenter's *The Fog*, like Stretch a disk jockey; divorced mother and newcomer in town, she is unattached and lonely but declines male attention. The Final Girl is also watchful to the point of paranoia; small signs of danger that her friends ignore, she registers. Above all she is intelligent and resourceful in a pinch. Thus Laurie even at her most desperate, cornered in a closet, has the wit to grab a hanger from the rack and bend it into a weapon; Marti can hot-wire her getaway car, the killer in pursuit; and the psych major of *Friday the Thir-*



A survivor goes after the killer of *Slumber Party Massacre*.

teenth II, on seeing the enshrined head of Mrs. Voorhees, can stop Jason in his tracks by assuming a stridently maternal voice. Finally, although she is always smaller and weaker than the killer, she grapples with him energetically and convincingly.

The Final Girl is boyish, in a word. Just as the killer is not fully masculine, she is not fully feminine—not, in any case, feminine in the ways of her friends. Her smartness, gravity, competence in mechanical and other practical matters, and sexual reluctance set her apart from the other girls and ally her, ironically, with the very boys she fears or rejects, not to speak of the killer himself. Lest we miss the point, it is spelled out in her name: Stevie, Marti, Terry, Laurie, Stretch, Will, Joey, Max. Not only the conception of the hero in *Alien* and *Aliens* but also the surname by which she is called, Ripley, owes a clear debt to slasher tradition.

With the introduction of the Final Girl, then, the *Psycho* formula is radically altered. It is not merely a question of enlarging the figure of Lila but of absorbing into her role, in varying degrees, the functions of Arbogast (investigator) and Sam (rescuer) and restructuring the narrative action from beginning to end around her progress in relation to the killer. In other words, *Psycho*'s detective plot, revolving around a revelation, yields in the modern slasher film to a hero plot, revolving around the main character's struggle with and eventual tri-

umph over evil. But for the femaleness, however qualified, of that main character, the story is a standard one of tale and epic.

Shock

One reason that the shower sequence in *Psycho* has "evoked more study, elicited more comment, and generated more shot-for-shot analysis from a technical viewpoint than any other in the history of cinema" is that it suggests so much but shows so little.²³ Of the forty-odd shots in as many seconds that figure the murder, only a single fleeting one actually shows the body being stabbed. The others present us with a rapid-fire sequence of shots of the knife, of the shower, of Marion's face, arm, and feet, finally the bloody water as it swirls down the drain and dissolves to the image of a large, still eye. The horror resides less in the actual images than in their summary implication.

Although Hitchcock is hardly the first director to prefer the oblique rendition of physical violence, he may, to judge from current examples, be one of the last. For better or worse, the perfection of special effects has made it possible to show maiming and dismemberment in extraordinarily credible detail. The horror genres are the natural repositories of such effects; what can be done is done, and slashers, at the bottom of the category, do it most and worst. Thus we see heads squashed and eyes popped out, faces flayed, limbs dismembered, eyes penetrated by needles in close-up, and so on.

With this new explicitness also comes a new tone. If the horror of *Psycho* was taken seriously, the "horror" of the slasher films is of a rather more complicated sort. Audiences express uproarious disgust ("Gross!") as often as they express fear, and it is clear that the makers of slasher films pursue the combination. More particularly: spectators tend to be silent during the stalking scenes (although they sometime call out warnings to the stalked person), scream out at the first slash, and make loud noises of revulsion at the sight of the bloody stump. The rapid alternation between registers—between something like "real" horror on one hand and a camp, self-parodying horror on the other—is by now one of the most conspicuous characteristics of the tradition. In its cultivation of intentionally outrageous excess, the slasher film intersects with the cult film, a genre devoted to such effects. Just what this self-ironizing relation to taboo signifies, beyond a remarkably competent audience, is unclear—it is yet another aspect of the phenomenon that has lain beyond criticism—but for the time

²³ Spoto, *The Dark Side of Genius*, p. 454. See also William Rothman, *Hitchcock*, pp. 246–341.

being it stands as a defining characteristic of the lower genres of popular culture.

THE BODY

On the face of it, the relation between the sexes in slasher films could hardly be clearer. The killer is with few exceptions recognizably human and distinctly male; his fury is unmistakably sexual in both roots and expression; his victims are mostly women, often sexually free and always young and beautiful. Just how essential this victim is to horror is suggested by her historical durability. If the killer has over time been variously figured as shark, fog, gorilla, birds, and slime, the victim is eternally and prototypically the damsel. Cinema hardly invented the pattern. It has simply given visual expression to the abiding proposition that, in Poe's famous formulation, the death of a beautiful woman is the "most poetical topic in the world."²⁴ As horror director Dario Argento puts it, "I like women, especially beautiful ones. If they have a good face and figure, I would much prefer to watch them being murdered than an ugly girl or man."²⁵ Brian De Palma elaborates: "Women in peril work better in the suspense genre. It all goes back to the *Perils of Pauline*. . . . If you have a haunted house and you have a woman walking around with a candelabrum, you fear more for her than you would for a husky man."²⁶ Or Hitchcock, during the filming of *The Birds*: "I always believe in following the advice of the playwright Sardou. He said, 'Torture the women!' The trouble today is that we don't torture women enough."²⁷ What the directors do not say, but show, is that "Pauline" is at her very most effective in a state of undress, borne down upon by a blatantly phallic murderer, even gurgling orgasmically as she dies. The case could be made that the slasher films available at a given neighborhood video rental outlet recommend themselves to censorship under the Dworkin-MacKinnon guidelines at least as readily as do the hard-core films the next section over, at which that legislation aimed; for if some of the victims are men, the argument goes, most are women, and the women are brutalized in ways that come too close to real life for comfort. But what this line of reasoning does not take into account is the figure of the Final Girl. Because slashers lie for all practical purposes beyond the purview of legiti-

²⁴ Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," p. 55.

²⁵ Argento as quoted in Schoell, *Stay Out of the Shower*, p. 54.

²⁶ De Palma as quoted in *ibid.*, p. 41.

²⁷ Hitchcock as quoted in Spoto, *The Dark Side of Genius*, p. 483.

mate criticism, and to the extent that they have been reviewed at all have been reviewed on an individual basis, the phenomenon of the female victim-hero has scarcely been acknowledged.²⁸

It is, of course, "on the face of it" that most of the public discussion of film takes place—from the Dworkin-MacKinnon legislation to Siskel and Ebert's reviews to our own talks with friends on leaving the movie house. Underlying that discussion is the assumption that the sexes are what they seem; that screen males represent the Male and screen females the Female; that this identification along gender lines authorizes impulses toward violence in males and encourages impulses toward victimization in females. In part because of the massive authority cinema by nature accords the image, even academic film criticism has been slow—slower than literary criticism—to get beyond appearances. Film may not appropriate the mind's eye, but it certainly encroaches on it; the gender characteristics of a screen figure are a visible and audible given for the duration of the film. To the extent that the possibility of cross-gender identification has been entertained, it has been that of the female with the male. Thus some critics have wondered whether the female viewer, faced with the screen image of a masochistic/narcissistic female, might not rather elect to "betray her sex and identify with the masculine point of view." The reverse question—whether men might not also, on occasion, elect to betray their sex and identify with screen females—has scarcely been asked, presumably on the assumption that men's interests are well served by the traditional patterns of cinematic representation. For there is the matter of the "male gaze." As E. Ann Kaplan sums it up, "within the film text itself, men gaze at women, who become objects of the gaze; the spectator, in turn, is made to identify with this male gaze, and to objectify the woman on the screen; and the camera's original 'gaze' comes into play in the very act of filming."²⁹ But if it is so that all of us, male and female alike, are by these processes "made to" identify with men and "against" women, how are we then to explain the appeal to a largely male audience of a film genre that features a female victim-hero? The slasher film brings us

²⁸ Cf. Dika's *Games of Terror*, which, although not particularly concerned with the female heroes of slasher films, does recognize their centrality and does suggest a reason for their emergence at this historical moment. The phenomenon has otherwise tended to be slighted or denied in treatments of modern horror (Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*; Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*; Twitchell, *Dreadful Pleasures*). Wood's essay "Beauty Bests the Beast" acknowledges the phenomenon but confines itself to a few examples.

²⁹ Silvia Bovenschen, "Is There a Feminine Aesthetic?" p. 114; E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film*, p. 15. See also Mary Ann Doane, "Misrecognition and Identity."

squarely up against fundamental questions of film analysis: where does the literal end and the figurative begin? how do the two levels interact and what is the significance of the interaction? and to which, in arriving at a political judgment (as we are inclined to do in the case of low horror and pornography in particular), do we assign priority?

A figurative or functional analysis of the slasher begins with the processes of point of view and identification. The male viewer seeking a male character, even a vicious one, with whom to identify in a sustained way has little to hang onto in the standard example. On the good side, the only viable candidates are the boyfriends or schoolmates of the girls. They are for the most part marginal, undeveloped characters. More to the point, they tend to die early in the film. If the traditional horror plot gave the male spectator a last-minute hero with whom to identify, thereby "indulging his vanity as protector of the helpless female,"³⁰ the slasher eliminates or attenuates that role beyond any such function; indeed, would-be rescuers are not infrequently blown away for their trouble, leaving the girl to fight her own fight. Policemen, fathers, and sheriffs appear only long enough to demonstrate risible incomprehension and incompetence. On the bad side, there is the killer. The killer is often unseen or barely glimpsed, during the first part of the film, and what we do see, when we finally get a good look, hardly invites immediate or conscious empathy. He is commonly masked, fat, deformed, or dressed as a woman. Or "he" is a woman: woe to the viewer of *Friday the Thirteenth* I who identifies with the male killer only to discover, in the film's final sequences, that he was not a man at all but a middle-aged mother. In either case, the killer is himself eventually killed or otherwise evacuated from the narrative. No male character of any stature lives to tell the tale.

The one character of stature who does live to tell the tale is in fact the Final Girl. She is introduced at the beginning and is the only character to be developed in any psychological detail. We understand immediately from the attention paid it that hers is the main story line. She is intelligent, watchful, levelheaded; the first character to sense something amiss and the only one to deduce from the accumulating evidence the pattern and extent of the threat; the only one, in other words, whose perspective approaches our own privileged understanding of the situation. We register her horror as she stumbles on the corpses of her friends. Her momentary paralysis in the face of death duplicates those moments of the universal nightmare experi-

³⁰ Wood, "Beauty Bests the Beast," p. 64.

ence—in which she is the undisputed “I”—on which horror frankly trades. When she downs the killer, we are triumphant. She is by any measure the slasher film’s hero. This is not to say that our attachment to her is exclusive and unremitting, only that it adds up, and that in the closing sequence (which can be quite prolonged) it is very close to absolute.

An analysis of the camerawork bears this out. Much is made of the use of the I-camera to represent the killer’s point of view. In these passages—they are usually few and brief, but striking—we see through his eyes and (on the soundtrack) hear his breathing and heartbeat. His and our vision is partly obscured by the bushes or window blinds in the foreground. By such means we are forced, the logic goes, to identify with the killer. In fact, however, the relation between camera point of view and the processes of viewer identification is poorly understood; the fact that Steven Spielberg can stage an attack in *Jaws* from the shark’s point of view (underwater, rushing upward toward the swimmer’s flailing legs) or Hitchcock an attack in *The Birds* from the bird-eye perspective (from the sky, as they gather to swoop down on the streets of Bodega) would seem to suggest either that the viewer’s identificatory powers are unbelievably elastic or that point-of-view shots can sometimes be pro forma.³¹ It has also been suggested that the hand-held or similarly unanchored first-person camera works as much to destabilize as to stabilize identification. I shall return to such matters at some length in chapter 4. For the moment, let us accept this equation: point of view = identification. We are linked, in this way, with the killer in the early part of the film, usually before we have seen him directly and before we have come to know the Final Girl in any detail. Our closeness to him wanes as our closeness to the Final Girl waxes—a shift underwritten by story line as well as camera position. By the end, point of view is hers: we are in the closet with her, watching with her eyes the knife blade pierce the door; in the room with her as the killer breaks through the window and grabs at her; in the car with her as the killer stabs through the convertible top, and so on. And with her, we become if not the killer of the killer then the agent of his expulsion from the narrative vision. If, during the film’s course, we shifted our sympathies back and forth and dealt them out to other characters along the

³¹ The locus classicus in this connection is the view-from-the-coffin shot in Carl Th. Dreyer’s *Vampyr*, in which the I-camera sees through the eyes of a dead man. See Nash, “*Vampyr* and the Fantastic,” esp. pp. 32–33. The 1987 remake of *The Little Shop of Horrors* (itself originally a low-budget horror film, made the same year as *Psycho* in two days) has us see the dentist from the proximate point of view of the patient’s tonsils.

way, we belong in the end to the Final Girl; there is no alternative. When Stretch eviscerates Chop Top at the end of *Texas Chain Saw II*, she is literally the only character left alive, on either side.

Audience response ratifies this design. Observers unanimously stress the readiness of the "live" audience to switch sympathies in midstream, siding now with the killer and now, and finally, with the Final Girl. As Schoell, whose book on shocker films wrestles with its own monster, "the feminists," puts it:

Social critics make much of the fact that male audience members cheer on the misogynous misfits in these movies as they rape, plunder, and murder their screaming, writhing female victims. Since these same critics walk out of the moviehouse in disgust long before the movie is over, they don't realize that these same men cheer on (with renewed enthusiasm, in fact) the heroines, who are often as strong, sexy, and independent as the [earlier] victims, as they blow away the killer with a shotgun or get him between the eyes with a machete. All of these men are said to be identifying with the maniac, but they enjoy *his* death throes the most of all, and applaud the heroine with admiration.³²

What filmmakers seem to know better than film critics is that gender is less a wall than a permeable membrane.³³

No one who has read "Red Riding Hood" to a small boy or attended a viewing of, say, *Deliverance* (an all-male story that women find as gripping as men do)—or, more recently, *Alien* and *Aliens*, with whose space-age female Rambo, herself a Final Girl, male viewers seem to engage with ease—can doubt the phenomenon of cross-gender identification.³⁴ This fluidity of engaged perspective is in

³² Schoell, *Stay Out of the Shower*, p. 55. Two points in this paragraph deserve emending. One is the suggestion that rape is common in these films; it is in fact virtually absent, by definition (see note 14 above). The other is the characterization of the Final Girl as "sexy." She may be attractive (though typically less so than her friends), but she is with few exceptions sexually inactive.

³³ Likewise age and social group. Wood is struck by the willingness of the teenage audience to identify "against" itself, with the forces of the enemy of youth. "Watching it [*Texas Chain Saw Massacre I*] recently with a large, half-stoned youth audience, who cheered and applauded every one of Leatherface's outrages against their representatives on the screen, was a terrifying experience" ("Return of the Repressed," p. 32).

³⁴ "I really appreciate the way audiences respond," Gail Anne Hurd, producer of *Aliens*, is reported to have said. "They buy it. We don't get people, even rednecks, leaving the theater saying 'That was stupid. No woman would do that.' You don't have to be a liberal ERA supporter to root for Ripley"; as reported in the *San Francisco Examiner Datebook*, 10 August 1986, p. 19. *Time* magazine (28 July 1986) suggests that Ripley's maternal impulses (she squares off against the worst aliens of all in her quest to save a little girl) give the audience "a much stronger rooting interest in Ripley, and that gives the picture resonances unusual in a popcorn epic." The drift has gained

keeping with the universal claims of the psychoanalytic model: the threat function and the victim function coexist in the same unconscious, regardless of anatomical sex. But why, if viewers can identify across gender lines and if the root experience of horror is sex blind, are the screen sexes not interchangeable? Why not more and better female killers, and why (in light of the maleness of the majority audience) not Pauls as well as Paulines? The fact that horror film so stubbornly figures the killer as male and the principal as female would seem to suggest that representation itself is at issue—that the sensation of bodily fright derives not exclusively from repressed content, as Freud insisted, but also from the bodily manifestations of that content.

Nor is the gender of the principals as straightforward as it first seems. The killer's phallic purpose, as he thrusts his drill or knife into the trembling bodies of young women, is unmistakable. At the same time, however, his masculinity is severely qualified: he ranges from the virginal or sexually inert to the transvestite or transsexual, and is spiritually divided ("the mother half of his mind") or even equipped with vulva and vagina. Although the killer of *God Told Me To* is represented and taken as a male in the film text, he is revealed, by the doctor who delivered him, to have been sexually ambiguous from birth: "I truly could not tell whether that child was male or female; it was as if the sexual gender had not been determined . . . as if it were being developed."³⁵ In this respect, slasher killers have much in common with the monsters of classic horror—monsters who, in Linda Williams's formulation, represent not just "an eruption of the normally repressed animal sexual energy of the civilized male" but also the "power and potency of a *non-phallic* sexuality." To the extent that the monster is constructed as feminine, the horror film thus expresses female desire only to show how monstrous it is.³⁶ The inten-

steam since then (and since the original writing of this essay). On the use of "red-necks" as the categorical Other, see chapter 3.

³⁵ Further: "When she [the mother] referred to the infant as a male, I just went along with it. Wonder how that child turned out—male, female, or something else entirely?" The birth is understood to be parthenogenetic, and the bisexual child, literally equipped with both sets of genitals, is figured as the reborn Christ. See also *Sleepaway Camp*, a film claimed to be especially popular with subteens, in which the mystery killer at the camp turns out to be one of the girl campers, a figure in turn revealed, in a climactic scene in which she is viewed without clothes, to be a boy.

³⁶ Linda Williams, "When the Woman Looks," p. 90. Williams's emphasis on the phallic leads her to dismiss slasher killers as a "non-specific male killing force" and hence a degeneration in the tradition. "In these films the recognition and affinity between woman and monster of classic horror film gives way to pure identity: she is the monster, her mutilated body the only visible horror" (p. 96). This analysis does not do

tion is manifest in *Aliens*, in which the Final Girl, Ripley, is pitted in the climactic scene against the most terrifying "alien" of all: an egg-laying Mother.

Decidedly "intrauterine" in quality is the Terrible Place, dark and often damp, in which the killer lives or lurks and whence he stages his most terrifying attacks. "It often happens," Freud wrote, "that neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This *unheimlich* place, however, is an entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning. . . . In this case too then, the *unheimlich* is what once was *heimisch*, familiar; the prefix 'un' [un-] is the token of repression."³⁷ It is the exceptional film that does not mark as significant the moment that the killer leaps out of the dark recesses of a corridor or cavern at the trespassing victim, usually the Final Girl. Long after the other particulars have faded, the viewer will remember the images of Amy assaulted from the dark halls of a morgue (*He Knows You're Alone*), or Melanie trapped in the attic as the savage birds close in (*The Birds*). In such scenes of convergence the Other is at its bisexual mightiest, the victim at her tiniest, and the component of sadomasochism at its most blatant.

The gender of the Final Girl is likewise compromised from the outset by her masculine interests, her inevitable sexual reluctance, her apartness from other girls, sometimes her name. At the level of the cinematic apparatus, her unfemininity is signaled clearly by her exercise of the "active investigating gaze" normally reserved for males and punished in females when they assume it themselves; tentatively at first and then aggressively, the Final Girl looks for the killer, even tracking him to his forest hut or his underground labyrinth, and then at him, therewith bringing him, often for the first time, into our vision as well. When, in the final scene, she stops screaming, faces the killer, and reaches for the knife (sledge hammer, scalpel, gun, machete, hanger, knitting needle, chain saw), she addresses the monster on his own terms. To the critics' objection that *Halloween* in effect punished female sexuality, director John Carpenter responded: "They [the critics] completely missed the boat there, I think. Because if you turn it around, the one girl who is the most sexually uptight just keeps stabbing this guy with a long knife. She's the most sexu-

justice to the obvious bisexuality (or at least modified masculinity) of slasher killers, nor does it take into account the new strength of the female victim. The slasher film may not, in balance, be more subversive than traditional horror, but it is certainly not less so.

³⁷ Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" p. 245.

ally frustrated. She's the one that killed him. Not because she's a virgin, but because all that repressed energy starts coming out. She uses all those phallic symbols on the guy. . . . She and the killer have a certain link: sexual repression."³⁸ For all its perversity, Carpenter's remark does underscore the sense of affinity, even recognition, that attends the final encounter. But the "certain link" that puts killer and Final Girl on terms, at least briefly, is more than "sexual repression." It is also a shared masculinity, materialized in "all those phallic symbols"—and it is also a shared femininity, materialized in what comes next (and what Carpenter, perhaps significantly, fails to mention): the castration, literal or symbolic, of the killer at her hands. The Final Girl has not just manned herself; she specifically unmans an oppressor whose masculinity was in question to begin with.³⁹ By the time the drama has played itself out, darkness yields to light (typically as day breaks) and the close quarters of the barn (closet, elevator, attic, basement) give way to the open expanse of the yard (field, road, lakescape, cliff). With the Final Girl's appropriation of "all those phallic symbols" comes the dispelling of the "uterine" threat as well. Consider again the paradigmatic ending of *Texas Chain Saw II*. From the underground labyrinth, murky and bloody, in which she faced saw, knife, and hammer, Stretch escapes through a culvert into the open air. She clambers up the jutting rock and with a chain saw takes her stand. When her last assailant comes at her, she slashes open his lower abdomen—the sexual symbolism is all too clear—and flings him off the cliff. Again, the final scene shows her in extreme long shot, standing on the ledge of a pinnacle, drenched in sunlight, buzzing chain saw held overhead.

The tale would indeed seem to be one of sex and parents. The patently erotic threat is easily seen as the materialized projection of the viewer's own incestuous fears and desires. It is this disabling cathexis to one's parents that must be killed and rekilld in the service of sexual autonomy. When the Final Girl stands at last in the light of day with the knife in her hand, she has delivered herself into the adult world. Carpenter's equation of the Final Girl with the killer has more than a grain of truth. The killers of *Psycho*, *The Eyes of Laura Mars*, *Friday the Thirteenth II–VI*, and *Cruising*, among others, are explicitly figured as sons in the psychosexual grip of their mothers (or fathers, in the case of *Cruising*). The difference is between past and present and between failure and success. The Final Girl enacts in the present,

³⁸ John Carpenter interviewed by Todd McCarthy, "Trick or Treat."

³⁹ See Williams, "When the Woman Looks" for a fuller speculation on castration as the link between woman and killer.

and successfully, the parenticidal struggle that the killer himself enacted unsuccessfully in his own past—a past that constitutes the film's backstory. She is what the killer once was; he is what she could become should she fail in her battle for sexual selfhood. "You got the choice, boy," says the tyrannical father of Leatherface in *Texas Chain Saw II*, "sex or the saw; you never know about sex, but the saw—the saw is the family."

The tale is no less one of maleness. If the experience of childhood can be—is perhaps ideally—enacted in female form, the breaking away requires the assumption of the phallus. The helpless child is gendered feminine; the autonomous adult or subject is gendered masculine; the passage from childhood to adulthood entails a shift from feminine to masculine. It is the male killer's tragedy that his incipient femininity is not reversed but completed (castration) and the Final Girl's victory that her incipient masculinity is not thwarted but realized (phallicization). When De Palma says that female frailty is a predicate of the suspense genre, he proposes, in effect, that the lack of the phallus, for Lacan the privileged signifier of the symbolic order, is itself simply horrifying, at least in the mind of the male observer. Where pornography (the argument goes) resolves that lack through a process of fetishization that allows a breast or leg or whole body to stand in for the missing member, the slasher film resolves it either through eliminating the woman (earlier victims) or reconstituting her as masculine (Final Girl). The moment at which the Final Girl is effectively phallicized is the moment that the plot halts and horror ceases. Day breaks, and the community returns to its normal order.

Casting psychoanalytic verities in female form has a venerable cinematic history. Ingmar Bergman, for one, has made a career of it. One immediate practical advantage, by now presumably unconscious on the part of makers as well as viewers, has to do with a preestablished cinematic "language" for capturing the moves and moods of the female body and face. The cinematic gaze, we are told, is male, and just as that gaze "knows" how to fetishize the female form in pornography (in a way that it does not "know" how to fetishize the male form),⁴⁰ so it "knows," in horror, how to track a woman ascending a staircase in a scary house and how to study her face from an angle above as she first hears the killer's footfall. A set

⁴⁰ So traditional film and heterosexual pornography, in any case. Gay male pornography, however, films some male bodies in much the same way that heterosexual pornography films female bodies, and even mainstream cinema has begun to linger over male torsos and buns in ways that halt the narrative flow (such halting being, for Laura Mulvey, the hallmark of the fetishizing gaze). See Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," esp. pp. 11–14.

of conventions we now take for granted simply "sees" males and females differently.

To this cinematic habit may be added the broader range of emotional expression traditionally allowed women. Angry displays of force may belong to the male, but crying, cowering, screaming, fainting, trembling, begging for mercy belong to the female. Abject terror, in short, is gendered feminine, and the more concerned a given film is with that condition—and it is the essence of modern horror—the more likely the femaleness of the victim.⁴¹ It is no accident that male victims in slasher films are killed swiftly or offscreen, and that prolonged struggles, in which the victim has time to contemplate her imminent destruction, inevitably figure females. Only when one encounters the rare expression of abject terror on the part of a male (as in *I Spit on Your Grave*) does one apprehend the full extent of the cinematic double standard in such matters.⁴²

It is also the case that gender displacement can provide a kind of identificatory buffer, an emotional remove that permits the majority audience to explore taboo subjects in the relative safety of vicariousness. Just as Bergman came to realize that he could explore castration anxiety more freely via depictions of hurt female bodies (witness the genital mutilation of Karin in *Cries and Whispers*), so the makers of slasher films seem to know that sadomasochistic incest fantasies sit more easily with the male viewer when the visible player is female. It is one thing for that viewer to hear the psychiatrist intone at the end of *Psycho* that Norman as a boy (in the backstory) was abnormally attached to his mother; it would be quite another to see that attachment dramatized in the present, to experience in nightmare form the elaboration of Norman's (the viewer's own) fears and desires. If the former is playable in male form, the latter, it seems, is not.

The Final Girl is, on reflection, a congenial double for the adolescent male. She is feminine enough to act out in a gratifying way, a way unapproved for adult males, the terrors and masochistic pleasures of the underlying fantasy, but not so feminine as to disturb the structures of male competence and sexuality. The question then arises whether the Final Girls of slasher films—Stretch, Stevie, Marti, Will, Terry, Laurie, and Ripley—are not boyish for the same reason that female "victims" in Victorian flagellation literature—"Georgy,"

⁴¹ Tudor's *Monsters and Mad Scientists* charts and speculates on the reasons for the increasing centrality of victimization in horror cinema.

⁴² See chapter 3 ("Getting Even") for a comparison of the visual treatment of the (male) rape in *Deliverance* with the (female) rapes in such films as Hitchcock's *Frenzy*, Wes Craven's *Last House on the Left*, and Ingmar Bergman's *The Virgin Spring*.

"Willy"—are boyish: because they are transformed males. The transformation, Steven Marcus writes, "is itself both a defense against and a disavowal of the fantasy it is simultaneously expressing—namely, that a *boy* is being beaten—that is, loved—by another man."⁴³ What is represented as male-on-female violence, in short, is figuratively speaking male-on-male sex. For Marcus, the literary picture of flagellation, in which *girls* are beaten, is utterly belied by the descriptions (in *My Secret Life*) of real-life episodes in which the persons being beaten are not girls at all but "gentlemen" dressed in women's clothes ("He had a woman's dress on tucked up to his waist, showing his naked rump and thighs. . . . On his head was a woman's cap tied carefully round his face to hide whiskers") and whipped by prostitutes. Reality, Marcus writes, "puts the literature of flagellation out of the running . . . by showing how that literature is a completely distorted and idealized version of what actually happens."⁴⁴ Applied to the slasher film, this logic reads the femaleness of the Final Girl (at least up to the point of her transformation) and indeed of the woman victims in general as only apparent, the artifact of heterosexual deflection. It may be through the female body that the body of the audience is sensationalized, but the sensation is an entirely male affair.⁴⁵

At least one director, Hitchcock, explicitly located thrill in the equation victim = audience. So we judge from his marginal jottings in the shooting instructions for the shower scene in *Psycho*: "The slashing. An impression of a knife slashing, as if tearing at the very screen, ripping the film."⁴⁶ Not just the body of Marion is to be ruptured, but also the body on the other side of the film and screen: our witnessing body. As Marion is to Norman, the audience of *Psycho* is to Hitchcock; as the audiences of horror film in general are to the directors of

⁴³ Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians*, pp. 260–61. Marcus distinguishes two phases in the development of flagellation literature: one in which the figure being beaten is a boy, and the second, in which the figure is a girl. The very shift indicates, at some level, the irrelevance of apparent sex. "The sexual identity of the figure being beaten is remarkably labile. Sometimes he is represented as a boy, sometimes as a girl, sometimes as a combination of the two—a boy dressed as a girl, or the reverse." The girls often have sexually ambiguous names, as well. The beater is a female, but in Marcus's reading a phallic one—muscular, possessed of body hair—representing the father.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 125–27.

⁴⁵ It could be argued that *The Burning*, a summer-camp slasher movie in which the function of Final Girl is filled not by a female character but by a nerdish male one (who finally finds it in himself to stop cringing and running and fight back, with the result that it is he, not the "normal" boys, who brings the monster down), reveals the essential maleness of the story (and hence supports a reading of the Final Girl as boy in drag). The question remains why the function is so frequently and conspicuously played by a female.

⁴⁶ As quoted by Spoto, *The Dark Side of Genius*, p. 431.

those films, female is to male. Hitchcock's "torture the women" then means, simply, torture the audience. De Palma's remarks about female frailty ("Women in peril work better in the suspense genre. . . . you fear more for her than you would for a husky man") likewise contemplate a male-on-"female" relationship between director and viewer. Cinefantastic horror, in short, succeeds in incorporating its spectators as "feminine" and then violating that body—which recoils, shudders, cries out collectively—in ways otherwise imaginable, for males, only in nightmare. The equation is nowhere more plainly put than in David Cronenberg's *Videodrome*. Here the threat is a mind-destroying video signal; the victims, television viewers. Despite the (male) hero's efforts to defend his mental and physical integrity, a deep, vagina-like gash appears on his lower abdomen. Says the media conspirator as he thrusts a videocassette into the victim's gaping wound, "You must open yourself completely to this."

If the slasher film is "on the face of it" a genre with at least a strong female presence, it is in these figurative readings a thoroughly male exercise, one that finally has very little to do with femaleness and very much to do with phallocentrism. Figuratively seen, the Final Girl is a male surrogate in things oedipal, a homoerotic stand-in, the audience incorporate; to the extent she means "girl" at all, it is only for purposes of signifying male lack, and even that meaning is nullified in the final scenes. Our initial question—how to square a female victim-hero with a largely male audience—is not so much answered as it is obviated in these readings. The Final Girl is (apparently) female not despite the maleness of the audience, but precisely because of it. The discourse is wholly masculine, and females figure in it only insofar as they "read" some aspect of male experience. To applaud the Final Girl as a feminist development, as some reviews of *Aliens* have done with Ripley, is, in light of her figurative meaning, a particularly grotesque expression of wishful thinking.⁴⁷ She is simply an agreed-upon fiction and the male viewer's use of her as a vehicle for his own sadomasochistic fantasies an act of perhaps timeless dishonesty.

For all their immediate appeal, these figurative readings loosen as many ends as they tie together. The audience, we have said, is pre-

⁴⁷ This would seem to be the point of the final sequence of Brian De Palma's *Blow-Out*, in which we see the boyfriend of the victim-hero stab the killer to death but later hear the television announce that the woman herself vanquished the killer. The frame plot of the film has to do with the making of a slasher film ("Co-Ed Frenzy"), and it seems clear that De Palma means his ending to stand as a comment on the Final Girl formula of the genre. De Palma's (and indirectly Hitchcock's) insistence that only men can kill men, or protect women from men, deserves a separate essay.

dominantly male; but what about the women in it? Do we dismiss them as male-identified and account for their experience as an "im-masculated" act of collusion with the oppressor?⁴⁸ This is a strong judgment to apply to large numbers of women; for while it may be that the audience for slasher films is mainly male, this does not mean that there are not also many female viewers who actively like such films, and of course there are also women, however few, who script, direct, and produce them. These facts alone oblige us at least to consider the possibility that female fans find a meaning in the text and image of these films that is less inimical to their own interests than the figurative analysis would have us believe. Or should we conclude that males and females read these films differently in some fundamental sense? Do females respond to the text (the literal) and males the subtext (the figurative)?⁴⁹

Some such notion of differential understanding underlies the homoerotic reading. The silent presupposition of that reading is that male identification with the female cannot be, and that the male viewer/reader who adjoins feminine experience does so only by homosexual conversion. But does female identification with male experience then similarly indicate a lesbian conversion? Or are the processes of patriarchy so one-way that the female can identify with the male directly, but the male can identify with the female only by transsexualizing her? Does the Final Girl mean "girl" to her female viewers and "boy" to her male viewers? If her masculine features qualify her as a transformed boy, do not the feminine features of the killer qualify him as a transformed woman (in which case the homoerotic reading can be maintained only by defining that "woman" as phallic and retransforming her into a male)? Striking though it is, the analogy between the Victorian flagellation story's Georgy and the slasher film's Stretch falters at the moment that Stretch turns on her assailant and unmans him. Are we to suppose that a homoerotic beating fantasy suddenly yields to what folklorists call a lack-liquidated fantasy? Further: is it simply coincidence that this combination tale—trials, then triumph—bears such a marked resemblance to the classic (male) hero story? Does the standard hero story featuring an anatomical female "mean" differently from one featuring an anatomical male?

As Marcus perceived, the relationship between the Georgy stories of flagellation literature and the real-life anecdote of the Victorian gentlemen is a marvelously telling one. In his view, the maleness of

⁴⁸ The term is Judith Fetterley's. See her *Resisting Reader*.

⁴⁹ On the possible variety of responses to a single film, see Norman N. Holland, "I-ing Film."

the latter must prove the essential or functional maleness of the former. What his analysis does not come to full grips with, however, is the clothing the gentleman wears—not that of a child, as Marcus's "childish" reading of the scene contemplates, but explicitly that of a woman.⁵⁰ These women's clothes can of course be understood, within the terms of the homoerotic interpretation, as a last-ditch effort on the part of the gentleman to dissociate himself from the (incestuous) homosexuality implicit in his favored sexual practice. But can they not just as well, and far more economically, be explained as part and parcel of a fantasy of literal femaleness? By the same token, cannot the femaleness of the gentleman's literary representatives—the girls of the flagellation stories—be understood as the obvious, even necessary, extension of that man's dress and cap? The same dress and cap, I suggest, haunt the margins of the slasher film. This is not to deny the deflective convenience, for the male spectator (and filmmaker), of a female victim-hero in a context so fraught with taboo; it is only to suggest that the femaleness of this character is also conditioned by a kind of imaginative curiosity about the feminine in and of itself.

So too the psychoanalytic case. These films do indeed seem to pit the child in a struggle, at once terrifying and attractive, with the parental Other, and it is a rare example that does not directly thematize parent-child relations. But if Freud stressed the maternal source of the *Unheimlich*, the Other of our films is decidedly androgynous: female/feminine in aspects of character and place (the "intrauterine" locale) but male in anatomy. Conventional logic may interpret the killer as the phallic mother of the transformed boy (the Final Girl), but the text itself does not compel such a reading. On the contrary, the text at every level presents us with hermaphroditic constructions—constructions that draw attention to themselves and demand to be taken on their own terms.

For if we define the Final Girl as nothing more than a figurative male, what do we then make of the context of the spectacular gender play in which she is emphatically situated? In his essay on the uncanny, Freud rejected out of hand Jentsch's theory that the experience of horror proceeds from intellectual uncertainty (curiosity?)—feelings of confusion, induced by an author or a coincidence, about

⁵⁰ Marcus contents himself with noting that the scene demonstrates a "confusion of sexual identity." In the literature of flagellation, he adds, "this confused identity is also present, but it is concealed and unacknowledged." But it is precisely the femaleness of the beaten figures that does acknowledge it (Marcus, *The Other Victorians*, p. 127).

who, what, and where one is.⁵¹ One wonders, however, whether Freud would have been quite so dismissive if, instead of the mixed materials he used as evidence, he were presented with a coherent story corpus—forty slashers, say—in which the themes of incest and separation were relentlessly played out by a female character, and further in which gender identity was repeatedly thematized as an issue in and of itself. For although the factors we have considered thus far—the conventions of the male gaze, the feminine constitution of abject terror, the value for the male viewer of emotional distance from the taboos in question, the special horror that may inhere, for the male audience, in phallic lack, the homoerotic deflection—go a long way in explaining why it is we have Pauline rather than Paul as our victim-hero, they do not finally account for our strong sense that gender is simply being fooled with, and that part of the thrill lies precisely in the resulting “intellectual uncertainty” of sexual identity.

The “play of pronoun function” that underlies and defines the cinefantastic is nowhere more richly manifested than in the slasher; if the genre has an aesthetic base, it is exactly that of a visual identity game.⁵² Consider, for example, the now-standard habit of letting us view the action in the first person long before revealing who or what the first person *is*. In the opening sequence of *Halloween I*, “we” are belatedly revealed to ourselves, after committing a murder in the cinematic first person, as a six-year-old boy. The surprise is often within gender, but it is also, in a striking number of cases, across it. Again, *Friday the Thirteenth I*, in which “we” stalk and kill a number of teenagers over the course of an hour of movie time without even knowing who “we” are; we are invited, by conventional expectation and by glimpses of “our” own bodily parts—a heavily booted foot, a roughly gloved hand—to suppose that “we” are male, but “we” are revealed, at film’s end, as a woman. If this is the most dramatic case of pulling out the gender rug, it is by no means the only one. In *Dressed to Kill*, we are led to believe, again by means of glimpses, that “we” are female—only to discover, in the denouement, that “we” are a male in drag. In *Psycho*, the dame we glimpse holding the knife

⁵¹ Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’ ” esp. pp. 219–21 and 226–27. For a fine discussion of Freud’s relation to Jentsch’s position in this essay, see Françoise Meltzer’s “The Uncanny Rendered Canny: Freud’s Blind Spot in Reading Hoffman’s ‘The Sandman.’ ”

⁵² For Jackson (*Fantasy*) and Nash (“*Vampyr* and the Fantastic”), the fantastic depends for its effect on the uncertainty of vision, a profusion of perspectives and a confusion of subjective and objective. To the extent that film can present “unreal” combinations of objects and events as “real” through the camera eye, Jackson argues, the “cinematic process itself might be called fantastic” (p. 31). Nash coins the term “cinefantastic” to describe the “play of pronoun function” in which horror/fantasy films in particular engage (esp. p. 37).

with a "visible virility quite obscene in an old lady" is later revealed, after additional gender teasing, to be Norman in his mother's clothes.⁵³ *Psycho II* plays much the same game. *Cruising* (in which, not accidentally, transvestites play a prominent role) adjusts the terms along heterosexual/homosexual lines. The tease here is whether the originally straight detective assigned to the string of murders in a gay community does or does not succumb to his assumed homosexual identity; the camerawork leaves us increasingly uncertain as to his (our) sexual inclinations, not to speak of his (our) complicity in the crimes. Even at film's end we are not sure who "we" were during several of the first-person sequences.⁵⁴

The gender-identity game, in short, is too patterned and too pervasive in the slasher film to be dismissed as supervenient. It would seem instead to be an integral element of the particular brand of bodily sensation in which the genre trades. Nor is it exclusive to horror. It is directly thematized in comic terms in the "gender-benders" *Tootsie* (in which a man passes himself off as a woman), *All of Me* (in which a woman is literally introjected into a man and affects his speech, movement, and thought), and *Switch*. It is also directly thematized, in the form of bisexual and androgynous figures and relations, in such cult films as *Pink Flamingos* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. (Some version of it is indeed repeatedly enacted on MTV.) It is further thematized (predictably enough, given their bodily concerns) in such pornographic films as *Every Woman Has a Fantasy*, in which a man, in order to gain access to a women's group in which sexual fantasies are discussed, dresses and passes himself off as a woman. (The degree to which "male" pornography in general relies for its effect on cross-gender identification remains an open question; the proposition makes a certain sense of the obligatory lesbian sequences and the phenomenal success of *Behind the Green Door*, to pick just two examples.)⁵⁵ All of these films, and others like them, seem to be ask-

⁵³ Raymond Durnat, *Films and Feelings*, p. 216.

⁵⁴ Not a few critics have argued that the ambiguity is the unintentional result of bad filmmaking.

⁵⁵ In her review of *Not a Love Story*, Susan Barrowclough writes that the "male spectator takes the part not of the male, but the female. Contrary to the assumption that the male uses pornography to confirm and celebrate his gender's sexual activity and dominance, is the possibility of his pleasure in identifying with a 'feminine' passivity or subordination" (pp. 35-36). Alan Soble seconds the proposal in his *Pornography* (esp. p. 93). Claims porn/exploitation filmmaker Joe Sarno: "My point of view is more or less always from the woman's point of view; I stress the efficacy of women for themselves. In general, I focus on the female orgasm as much as I can" (as quoted by V. Vale and Andrea Juno, *Incredibly Strange Films*, p. 94). "Male identification with women," Kaja Silverman writes, "has not received the same amount of critical atten-

ing some version of the question: what would it be like to be, or to seem to be, if only temporarily, a woman? Taking exception to the reception of *Tootsie* as a feminist film, Elaine Showalter argues that the success of "Dorothy Michaels" (the Dustin Hoffman character), as far as both plot and audience are concerned, lies in the veiling of masculine power in feminine costume. *Tootsie's* cross-dressing, she writes,

is a way of promoting the notion of masculine power while masking it. In psychoanalytic theory, the male transvestite is not a powerless man; according to the psychiatrist Robert Stoller, in *Sex and Gender*, he is a "phallic woman" who can tell himself that "he is, or with practice will become, a better woman than a biological female if he chooses to do so." When it is safe or necessary, the transvestite "gets great pleasure in revealing that he is a male-woman. . . . The pleasure in tricking the unsuspecting into thinking that he is a woman, and then revealing his maleness (e.g., by suddenly dropping his voice) is not so much erotic as it is proof that there is such a thing as a woman with a penis." Dorothy's effectiveness is the literal equivalent of speaking softly and carrying a big stick.⁵⁶

By the same literalistic token, then, Stretch's success must lie in the fact that in the end, at least, she "speaks loudly" *even though* she carries *no* "stick." Just as "Dorothy" 's voice slips serve to remind us that her character really is male, so the Final Girl's "tits and scream" serve more or less continuously to remind us that she really is female—even as, and despite the fact that, she in the end acquits herself "like a man."⁵⁷ Her chain saw is thus what "Dorothy Michaels" 's skirt is: a figuration of what she *does* and what she *seems*, as opposed to—and the films turn on the opposition—what she *is*. The idea that appearance and behavior do not necessarily indicate sex—indeed, can misindicate sex—is predicated on the understanding that sex is one thing and gender another; in practice, that sex is life, a less-than-interesting given, but that gender is theater. What-

tion [as sublimation into professional "showing off" and reversal into scopophilia], although it would seem to be the most potentially destabilizing, at least as far as gender is concerned" (in her discussion of the Great Male Renunciation in "Fragments of a Fashionable Discourse," p. 141 (briefly recapitulated in *The Acoustic Mirror*, pp. 24–27). The most significant development in the consideration of pornographic "identifications" is Linda Williams's 1989 *Hard Core*.

⁵⁶ Elaine Showalter, "Critical Cross Dressing," p. 138.

⁵⁷ Whatever its other functions, the scene that reveals the Final Girl in a degree of undress serves to underscore her femaleness. As a reviewer remarked of the scene toward the end of *Aliens* (likewise *Alien*), "we have Ripley wandering around clad only in her underwear. A little reminder of her gender, lest we lose sight of it behind all that firepower?" (Christine Schoefer, *East Bay Express*, 5 September 1986, p. 37).

ever else it may be, Stretch's waving of the chain saw is a moment of high drag. Its purpose is not to make us forget that she is a girl but to thrust that fact on us. The moment, it should be added, is also one that openly mocks the literary/cinematic conventions of symbolic representation.

It may be just this theatricalization of gender that makes possible the willingness of the male viewer to submit himself to a brand of spectator experience that Hitchcock designated as "feminine" in 1960 and that has become only more so since then. In classic horror, the "feminization" of the audience is intermittent and ceases early. Our relationship with Marion's body in *Psycho* halts abruptly at the moment of its greatest intensity (slashing, ripping, tearing). The considerable remainder of the film distributes our bruised sympathies among several lesser figures, male and female, in such a way and at such length as to ameliorate the Marion experience and leave us, in the end, more or less recuperated in our presumed masculinity. Like Marion, the Final Girl is the designated victim, the audience incorporate, the slashing, ripping, and tearing of whose body will cause us to flinch and scream out in our seats. But unlike Marion, she does not die. If *Psycho*, like other classic horror films, solves the femininity problem by obliterating the female and replacing her with representatives of the masculine order (mostly but not inevitably males), the modern slasher solves it by regendering the woman. We are, as an audience, in the end "masculinized" by and through the very figure by and through whom we were earlier "feminized." The same body does for both, and that body is female.

The last point is the crucial one: the same *female* body does for both. The Final Girl (1) undergoes agonizing trials, and (2) virtually or actually destroys the antagonist and saves herself. By the lights of folk tradition, she is not a heroine, for whom phase 1 consists in being saved by someone else, but a hero, who rises to the occasion and defeats the adversary with his own wit and hands. Part 1 of the story sits well on the female; it is the heart of heroine stories in general (Red Riding Hood, Pauline), and in some figurative sense, in ways I have elaborated in some detail, it is gendered feminine even when played by a male. Odysseus's position, trapped in the cave of the Cyclops, is not after all so different from Pauline's lashed to the tracks or Sally's tied to a chair in the dining room of the slaughterhouse family. The decisive moment, as far as the fixing of gender is concerned, lies in what happens next: those who save themselves are male, and those who are saved by others are female. No matter how "feminine" his experience in phase 1, the traditional hero, if he rises against his adversary and saves himself in phase 2, will be male.

What is remarkable about the slasher film is how close it comes to reversing the priorities. Presumably for the various functional or figurative reasons I have considered in this chapter, phase 1 wants a female: on that point all slashers from *Psycho* on are agreed. Abject fear is still gendered feminine, and the taboo anxieties in which slashers trade are still explored more easily via Pauline than Paul. The slippage comes in phase 2. As if in mute deference to a cultural imperative, slasher films from the seventies bring in a last-minute male, even when he is rendered supernumerary by the Final Girl's sturdy defense. By 1980, however, the male rescuer is either dismissably marginal or dispensed with altogether; not a few films have him rush to the rescue only to be hacked to bits, leaving the Final Girl to save herself after all. At the moment that the Final Girl becomes her own savior, she becomes a hero; and the moment that she becomes a hero is the moment that the male viewer gives up the last pretense of male identification. Abject terror may still be gendered feminine, but the willingness of one immensely popular current genre to re-represent the hero as an anatomical female would seem to suggest that at least one of the traditional marks of heroism, triumphant self-rescue, is no longer strictly gendered masculine.

So too the cinematic apparatus. The classic split between "spectacle and narrative," which "supposes the man's role as the active one of forwarding the story, making things happen," is at least unsettled in the slasher film.⁵⁸ When the Final Girl (in films like *Hell Night* and *Texas Chain Saw Massacre II*) assumes the "active investigating gaze," she exactly reverses the look, making a spectacle of the killer and a spectator of herself. Again, it is through the killer's eyes (I-camera) that we saw the Final Girl at the beginning of the film, and through the Final Girl's eyes that we see the killer, often for the first time with any clarity, sometime around the middle of the film and toward the end increasingly. The gaze becomes, at least for a while, female. More to the point, the female exercise of scopic control results not in her annihilation, in the manner of classic cinema, but in her triumph; indeed, her triumph *depends* on her assumption of the gaze.⁵⁹

It is no surprise, in light of these developments, that the Final Girl should show signs of boyishness. Her symbolic phallicization, in the

⁵⁸ Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," p. 12.

⁵⁹ Of the "woman's film" (in particular *The Two Mrs. Carrolls*), Mary Ann Doane has written: "The woman's exercise of an active investigating gaze can only be simultaneous with her own victimization. The place of her specularization is transformed into the locus of a process of seeing designed to unveil an aggression against itself" (*The Desire to Desire*, p. 136). It must be this expectation of punishment that the slasher plays with and then upends.

last scenes, may or may not proceed at root from the horror of lack on the part of audience and maker. But it certainly proceeds from the need to bring her in line with the epic laws of Western narrative tradition—the very unanimity of which bears witness to the historical importance, in popular culture, of the literal representation of heroism in male form—and it proceeds no less from the need to render the reallocated gaze intelligible to an audience conditioned by the dominant cinematic apparatus.

It is worth noting that the higher genres of horror have traditionally resisted such developments. The idea of a female who outsmarts, much less outfights—or outgazes—her assailant is unthinkable in the films of De Palma and Hitchcock.⁶⁰ Although the slasher film's victims may be sexual teases, they are not in addition simpleminded, scheming, physically incompetent, and morally deficient in the manner of these filmmakers' female victims. And however revolting their special effects and sexualized their violence, few slasher murders approach the level of voluptuous sadism that attends the destruction of women in De Palma's films. For reasons on which we can only speculate, femininity is more conventionally elaborated and inexorably punished, and in an emphatically masculine environment, in the higher forms—the forms that *are* written up, and not by Joe Bob Briggs.

That the slasher film speaks deeply and obsessively to male anxieties and desires seems clear—if nothing else from the maleness of the majority audience. And yet these are texts in which the categories masculine and feminine, traditionally embodied in male and female, are collapsed into one and the same character—a character who is anatomically female and one whose point of view the spectator is unambiguously invited, by the usual set of literary-structural and cinematic conventions, to share. The willingness and even eagerness (so we judge from these films' enormous popularity) of the male viewer to throw in his emotional lot, if only temporarily, with not only a woman but a woman in fear and pain, at least in the first instance, would seem to suggest that he has a vicarious stake in that fear and pain. If it is also the case that the act of horror spectatorship is itself registered as a "feminine" experience—that the shock effects induce in the viewer bodily sensations answering the fear and pain of the screen victim—the charge of masochism is underlined. This is not to say that the male viewer does not also have a stake in the sadistic

⁶⁰ In fact, as Modleski has shown (*The Women Who Knew Too Much*) Hitchcock's relation to women is an ambivalent one. No one has attempted such an analysis of De Palma.

side; narrative structure, cinematic procedures, and audience response all indicate that he shifts back and forth with ease. It is only to suggest that in the Final Girl sequence his empathy with what the films define as the female posture is fully engaged, and further, because this sequence is inevitably the central one in any given film, that the viewing experience hinges on the emotional assumption of the feminine posture. Kaja Silverman takes it a step further: "I will hazard the generalization that it is always the victim—the figure who occupies the passive position—who is really the focus of attention, and whose subjugation the subject (whether male or female) experiences as a pleasurable repetition of his/her own story," she writes. "Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the fascination of the sadistic point of view is merely that it provides the best vantage point from which to watch the masochistic story unfold."⁶¹

The slasher is hardly the first genre in the literary and visual arts to invite identification with the female; one cannot help wondering more generally whether the historical maintenance of images of women in fear and pain does not have more to do with male vicarism than is commonly acknowledged. What distinguishes the slasher, however, is the absence or untenability of alternative perspectives and hence the exposed quality of the invitation. As a survey of the tradition shows, this has not always been the case. The stages of the Final Girl's evolution—her piecemeal absorption of functions previously represented in males—can be located in the years following 1978. The fact that the typical patrons of these films are the sons of marriages contracted in the sixties or even early seventies leads me to speculate that the dire claims of that era—that the women's movement, the entry of women into the workplace, and the rise of divorce and woman-headed families would yield massive gender confusion in the next generation—were not entirely wrong. We preferred, in the eighties, to speak of the cult of androgyny, but the point is roughly the same. The fact that we have in the killer a feminine male

⁶¹ Kaja Silverman, "Masochism and Subjectivity," p. 5. Needless to say, this is not the explanation for the girl-hero offered by the industry. *Time* magazine on *Aliens*: "As Director Cameron says, the endless 'remulching' of the masculine hero by the 'male-dominated industry' is, if nothing else, commercially shortsighted. 'They choose to ignore that 50% of the audience is female. And I've been told that it has been proved demographically that 80% of the time it's women who decide which film to see' " (28 July 1986). It is of course not Cameron who established the female hero of the series but Ridley Scott (in *Alien*), and it is fair to assume, from his careful manipulation of the formula, that Scott got her from the slasher film, where she has flourished for some time with audiences that are heavily male. (Nor is Cameron's claim that even mainstream audiences are 50% female borne out by any audience study I know of.) Cameron's analysis is thus both self-serving and beside the point.

and in the main character a masculine female—parent and everyteen, respectively—would seem, especially in the latter case, to suggest a loosening of the categories, or at least of the category of the feminine.⁶² It is not that these films show us gender and sex in free variation; it is that they fix on the irregular combinations, of which the combination masculine female repeatedly prevails over the combination feminine male. The fact that masculine males (boyfriends, fathers, would-be rescuers) are regularly dismissed through ridicule or death or both would seem to suggest that it is not masculinity per se that is being privileged, but masculinity in conjunction with a female body—indeed, as the term victim-hero contemplates, masculinity in conjunction with femininity. For if “masculine” describes the Final Girl some of the time, and in some of her more theatrical moments, it does not do justice to the sense of her character as a whole. She alternates between registers from the outset; before her final struggle she endures the deepest throes of “femininity”; and even during the final struggle she is now weak and now strong, now flees the killer and now charges him, now stabs and is stabbed, now cries out in fear and now shouts in anger. She is a physical female and a characterological androgyne: like her name, not masculine but either/or, both, ambiguous.⁶³

Robin Wood speaks of the sense that horror, for him the by-product of cultural crisis and disintegration, is “currently the most important of all American [film] genres and perhaps even the most progressive, even in its overt nihilism.”⁶⁴ Likewise Vale and Juno say of the “incredibly strange films,” mostly low-budget horror, that their volume surveys, “They often present unpopular—even radical—views addressing the social, political, racial, or sexual inequities, hy-

⁶² Dika proposes a political-allegorical reading of the Final Girl: “Female (a rarity in the American genre film) and “castrated,” she is a symbol for an enfeebled United States, but one that, when roused, is still strong” (*Games of Terror*, p. 138).

⁶³ If this analysis is correct, we may expect horror films of the future to feature Final Boys as well as Final Girls (Pauls as well as Paulines). Two figures may be incipient examples: Jesse, the pretty boy in *A Nightmare on Elm Street II*, and Ashley, the character who dies last in *The Evil Dead* (1983). Neither quite plays the role, but their names, and in the case of Jesse the characterization, seem to play on the traditions. *Misery* offers an interesting turn on the convention. Here the “feminine” or masochistic position is occupied by a man (one indeed with broken legs) and the position of sadistic, gender-disturbed, serial murderer (who “adores” the object of her attentions in much the way slasher killers sometimes “adore” their female victims) is played by a woman. It is an arrangement that allows for a particularly prolonged and brutal sadistic reversal.

⁶⁴ Wood, “Return of the Repressed,” p. 28. For the opposite view, based on classic horror in both literary and cinematic manifestations, see Franco Moretti, “The Dialectic of Fear.”

pocrisy in religion or government.”⁶⁵ And Tania Modleski rests her case against the Frankfurt School–derived critique of mass culture on the evidence of the slasher, which does *not* propose a spurious harmony; does *not* promote the “specious good” (but indeed often exposes and attacks it); does *not* ply the mechanisms of identification, narrative continuity, and closure to provide the sort of narrative pleasure constitutive of the dominant ideology.⁶⁶ One is deeply reluctant to make progressive claims for a body of cinema as spectacularly nasty toward women as the slasher film is, but the fact is that the slasher does, in its own perverse way and for better or worse, constitute a visible adjustment in the terms of gender representations. That it is an adjustment largely on the male side, appearing at the furthest possible remove from the quarters of theory and showing signs of trickling upward, is of no small interest in the study of popular culture.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Vale and Juno, *Incredibly Strange Films*, p. 5.

⁶⁶ Tania Modleski, “The Terror of Pleasure,” pp. 155–66.

⁶⁷ The upward trickle has become something of a flood since this essay was first published in 1987. See the Afterword, below.

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 1984. John Carpenter.
 1987. Joseph Ruben.
 1975. Bryan Forbes.
 1964. William Castle.
 1971. Sam Peckinpah.
 1985. Larry Cohen.
 1983. Clint Eastwood.
 1991. Blake Edwards.
1980. Kirdy Stevens.
 1895. Lumière Bros.
 1986. Ted Nicolaou.
 1974. Tobe Hooper.
 1986. Tobe Hooper.
 1991. Ridley Scott.
 See *Shivers*.
 1959. William Castle.
 1982. Sydney Pollack.
1988. Philip Kaufman.
 1988. Camilo Vila.
1986. Richard Wenk.
 1931. Carl Dreyer.
1958. Alfred Hitchcock.
 1982. David Cronenberg.
 1959. Ingmar Bergman.
 1961. Luis Buñuel.
 1979. Giulio Paradisi.
1967. Terence Young.
 1962. Robert Aldrich.
 1988. Donald Cammell.
 1987. Kevin S. Tenney.
 1981. Michael Wadleigh.

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